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ABSTRACT

Case studies in eight school settings identified the various curricula and services for delivering curricula to youth with disabilities. Settings represented a cross-section of schools in the Puget Sound Area of Washington State. Data were gathered through interviews and surveys of students, parents, special and general education teachers, principals, and counselors. Respondents indicated that about 10 percent of the student population had special needs, and this population was increasing. They suggested employment and independent living as major goals for students with disabilities. Vocational education was seen as the path to job readiness, and respondents recommended more and better preparation for the world of work. Most general education teachers, including those teaching vocational subjects, had little, if any, formal preparation in the area of special education, and many felt unprepared to teach students with special needs. Data indicated agreement that teachers should know something about the various types of disabilities, what to expect from special students, and what methods of instruction are appropriate. The implication for preparing new teachers would be to include practical experience and coursework in special education. (An appendix presents findings and recommendations regarding transition issues in three segments: curricular considerations, Parent Advisory Board and alumni parental involvement, and individual education plans and transition plan generators.) (YLB)

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Curriculum Mapping Project

We are a three year project located at the University of Washington and funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Currently we are in our third and final year. The following are the project goals:

Short Term Goals

To study high school level special education programs in various settings in the Puget Sound area of Washington State. Prepare a report for each setting based on 12 specific research questions, and make recommendations as to how these programs might be improved.

Long Term Goals

To make recommendations to teacher training institutions and certification agencies regarding preparation and certification of teachers, administrators, and others preparing to work with students with disabilities.

Thus far we have performed case studies in eight school settings. As far as possible these settings were selected to represent a cross-section of schools in our area. Schools were chosen from urban, suburban, and rural locations with varied population sizes, ethnicity, and socio-economic levels. Three and four year programs as well as one independent school were selected. Another consideration was the school's willingness to participate in our study. The diversity of these settings ranged from a well-to-do suburban independent high school to a school located in an urban youth detention center. The following is a list of the eight sites in our study including both the size of the student body and the number of students with disabilities.

1. Highline High School (suburban high school; population 1,264/89)
2. Tahoma High School (rural high school; population 957/110)
3. Puyallup High School (rural high school; population 1,490/141)
4. Eastside Catholic High School (independent high school; population 535/20)
5. Discovery School (alternative school; population /24)
6 Chief Sealth High School (urban high school; population 868/102)
7. Detention School (urban detention school; population 116/34)
8. Eatonville High School (rural high school; population 470/40)

The above schools are shown in a historical order. Studies have been completed at all schools, and six of the eight reports have been submitted to the schools for their consideration. The report for Detention School is in the editing stages, and the Eatonville report is being prepared. Currently, we are seeking feedback from schools as to the implementation of our recommendations and comments about the study process.

Data were gathered by means of interviews and surveys of students, parents, special education teachers, general education teachers, principals, counselors, instructional assistants, directors/administrators and other relevant persons. In addition, numerous classes were observed, and documents relating to our research questions were gathered and gleaned for additional information. Generally, interviews have been the most productive sources of data in our study, and thus far we have conducted 234 in-depth interviews at these eight locations. Our research is based on case studies and may be applicable to similar schools found in other places.

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November 29, 1993

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Serving Vocational Students with Special Needs

Currently at the University of Washington Mapping Curriculum project we are in the process of identifying the various curricula and services for delivering those curricula to youth with disabilities. Since the passage of P.L. 94-142, which mandates that youth with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment, increasing numbers of these youth have been educated in regular high school classes alongside their peers with no disabilities. However, data from various sources indicate that many are doing poorly in school, dropping out at rates that are disproportionally higher than those of the general population of students, and experiencing unsatisfactory lives after school. Districts, states, and the federal government have expressed deep concern and suggest that the time is right for a change. This concern has resulted in laws such as P.L. 101-476 (IDEA) which contains transition provisions to determine the nature and extent of vocational preparation that occurs for students with disabilities. In most cases transition means employment directly after high school or further education leading to employment.

Vocational education will undoubtedly play a large role in this transition. Furthermore, there is a large population of students who will require these services. As a part of our study, a survey of Washington state high schools was conducted. Respondents, high school principals and administrators, indicated that about 10% of the student population had special needs, and this population appears to be increasing. In one of our case studies the chairperson of the special education department indicated that while the total population at the high school has increased only slightly, the special education population has doubled. In the case of one independent school offering special education in the Seattle area, the demand is such that the program has many more applicants than it can accommodate. In the state of Washington there has been a 52% increase in the number of persons with developmental disabilities requesting services from the state's Division of Developmental Services during the last decade.

In our study, respondents suggested employment and independent living as major goals for students with disabilities. Vocational education was seen as the path to job readiness, and consistently respondents recommended more and better preparation for the world of work. This was true even for the one high school in our sample whose philosophy was that a good academic education was the best vocational preparation for all students, including ones with disabilities. While student and parent respondents from this school expressed great satisfaction with the program during their school years, alumni of the

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program expressed dissatisfaction in the area of vocational preparation and job readiness. Consequently, our recommendations to this special education program were mostly vocational in nature. (For our recommendations please see the Appendix.)

All of this leads one to conclude that vocational educators can expect to see more persons with disabilities in their classrooms. Traditionally, vocational educators have welcomed all students. The critical question is, how well prepared are we to serve this population? Surveys, observations, and interviews conducted in eight western Washington high schools indicate that most general education teachers, including those teaching vocational subjects, have little if any formal preparation in the area of special education. This is not surprising since Washington state does not require a special education component in the certification of vocational teachers. Vocational classes are popular with special students, and Washington state has an occupational education requirement for high school graduation which "... may be met by any approved vocational education course or any course which qualifies as a work skill" (Washington Administrative Code, WAC 180-51-080). It is a paradox that many special education students participate in vocational education and graduate by meeting this requirement, yet most vocational teachers who teach them have not had formal preparation in special education. General education teachers, including vocational teachers, become interested in special education when they discover that they have special students in their classes, and then it is up to them to prepare themselves to serve these students. By choice or by happenstance many vocational teachers have become de facto special educators.

While most vocational teachers and teachers in general do learn to work with special students, this is not always the case. During our study we have found that the chair of the special education program at a high school can quickly assess the general faculty's willingness to work with special students. Plusses are assigned to the general faculty who are well prepared and willing to work with special students, and minuses are assigned to ones that are not prepared or are not willing to work with special students. The majority of the faculty fall somewhere in between these two extremes. When faced with the responsibility of educating youths with special needs, successful teachers work out strategies and techniques they find useful, effective, and practical (e.g., establishing personal relationships with the students, assigning classmates to assist special students, providing individual assistance, demonstrating or modeling procedures, providing extra time to complete assignments, placing students at the proper instructional level, arranging for peer tutoring). On-the-job training is an excellent method of learning, provided there

is a master practitioner to guide the process. These teachers, who work out strategies and techniques for working with special students on their own, should be commended for their efforts and their dedication. But most of the techniques that they discover are already being used by experienced teachers or they are being taught in teacher education courses. Since most of these "discoveries" already exist, it should be more efficient and less frustrating if general education teachers, including vocational teachers, were prepared *before* the students show up for class. Our study indicates that many general education teachers, including vocational teachers, feel unprepared to teach students with special needs, and they see a need for professional improvement in this area.

Does this mean that general teachers, including vocational teachers, should go back to college and get a degree in special education? Should they continue to work it out on their own? Thus far data have been gathered from seven public high schools and one independent high school. Generally, there is agreement that teachers should know something about the various types of disabilities, what to expect from special students, and what methods of instruction are appropriate. Respondents have pointed out the value of hands-on experiences such as practica, classroom exposure, internships, and apprenticeship-type programs working with master special education teachers in classrooms when preparing to work with special students. Coursework was seen as being worthwhile, but it did not receive the same consistent positive response as practical experience.

The implication for preparing new teachers would be to include practical experience and coursework in special education in the preparation program, and our research indicates this to be the case for some recent graduates of teacher preparation programs. As for general teachers who are already working, they should be given opportunities to include these activities in their professional improvement plans. For the most part, additional training is left to the individual teacher's initiative. For vocational teachers the situation is somewhat different. Vocational teachers are obliged to participate in professional improvement activities in order to acquire and maintain their teaching credential, but the requirements are fairly rigid and priority is given to completing the required units I, II, and III (methods of teaching, occupational analysis, and course organization/curriculum development). There are a number of other occupational teacher education courses mentioned in the Washington state certification standards for secondary as well as community college vocational teachers. However, none of these courses deals specifically with the instruction of students with special needs. This lack of requirement

is reflected in two-year community college programs designed to prepare occupational teachers. For instance, the Seattle Community College Occupational Teacher Education (OTE) program, which is the largest and most comprehensive program of this type in Washington state, lacks a special education component. The situation is similar in other Washington state community colleges, where the major emphasis is on satisfying state certification requirements.

The results of our study indicate that some students with special needs do intend to go on to further education. Furthermore, most of these students intend to go to a community or technical college. Vocational preparation is the major area. Again, the question is what can they expect when they get there? Since preparation in special education is not required and OTE classes dealing with special education are not offered, community and technical college vocational instructors will typically lack the preparation to educate students with special needs. Currently, students with special needs are served by a coordinator of special needs. At most Washington state community colleges this is a part-time position or a part-time responsibility. When a special education issue arises, the student or instructor is to seek out the coordinator and receive assistance on an individual basis. This approach is a good start, but it falls short of what is needed. Since there are students with special needs in vocational programs at community and technical colleges, certification standards should include a special education component for vocational instructors. At the very least, preparation in this area should be made readily available. What form should this preparation take? Our study participants advocated practical hands-on experience, working with master special education teachers, and coursework dealing with specific issues such as types of disabilities and how to instruct students with disabilities.

Appendix

Recommendations

During our study at XXXX, we found many noteworthy practices, policies, and attitudes that we feel contribute to the generally positive outcomes for the students that we observed and surveyed and that were reported by the parents of both current XXXX students and alumni. The one area that seemed to require additional attention and direction was that of transition. As the study progressed, and we had opportunities to interview staff and parents and to analyze the data from both interviews and surveys, the transition issue appeared as the single "problem" area throughout. Teachers and administrators alike recognized this deficiency We frequently received remarks noting that efforts were in the works to strengthen the component.

The following findings and recommendations regarding transition issues are presented in three segments: curricular considerations; Parent Advisory Board (PAB) and alumni parental involvement; and IEPs and transition plan generators.

1. Curricular Considerations

- Curricular options – Currently XXXX has a Careers class in which students engage in work-related activities. The one class we observed -- making espresso – was good as far as it went, but in the opinion of the observers could have been expanded. An entire unit could be built around such an activity. Instead of one class period of practice learning how to use the espresso machine, students could have had as a goal the ability to do all of the steps independently. It is doubtful from our observation, that any of the students would be able to perform even one of the steps without supervision. Further, a mock espresso shop could have been set up to enable the students to perform other tasks related to making and serving espresso, such as learning about types of coffee; preparing containers of milk, cream, sugar, artificial sweeteners; making sure cups, napkins, stirrers, are clean and available; knowing and being able to request proper payment for the product; conducting the transaction with confidence and a pleasant demeanor; putting the "shop" in order periodically, including arranging chairs, cleaning tables and counters, and clearing and cleaning dishes; and finally cleaning the espresso machine at the end of each session.

- Thematic units -- One of the most innovative aspects of the curriculum of the XXXX Options program that we observed was the use of themes to integrate all academic subject areas. It was evident that a great deal of time, energy, and creativity went into

the development and implementation of this tailored curriculum in order to provide students with experiences that would excite and motivate them. The themes we observed during our study at XXXX were Japan, politics, and the '50s.

As was the case with the espresso exercise, each thematic activity could have been expanded to include employment and vocational components. For example, the Japanese theme included visits to a Japanese restaurant, supermarket, Asian museum, and Japanese gardens (another possible field trip might include the Japanese tea garden in the Arboretum). Each of these sites offers many possibilities for employment for the Options students, and such a focus would not diminish the desired "enrichment" that the activities are attempting to instill. At each of the sites, different personnel could talk with the students about what they do, demonstrate what their job entails, and answer questions posed by the students. Preparation, including priming the students with initial questions, could take place prior to the visit.

The following provides concrete suggestions on how to incorporate job-related information into each of the planned activities:

- Asian supermarket -- Information that might be useful in a practical sense are the kinds of food that are stocked, how they are grouped or arranged on the shelves, where to find them in the store, what is meant by "Aisle 1" or whatever designation the store uses to organize the stock, and so forth. An exercise might be to shop for ingredients for a meal. Thus, the in-school exercise might include creating a menu, reading a Japanese cookbook, and developing a shopping list. Each student could select an ingredient to find in the supermarket. The various jobs that might be of interest to the students include arranging the produce and other products, ringing up the groceries, collecting money, and bagging groceries. All activities should include a component that emphasizes conducting oneself in a "professional" manner.
- Asian museum -- Classroom activities might address the kinds of exhibits that students could be expected to see and how they are arranged, such as by dynasty or type of art. While "cultural enrichment" may be the ultimate goal, the emphasis should be on personal relevance. What would be interesting for the students and why? Once more, the employment opportunities provide a structure within which to present content that students may readily relate to. The types of jobs that might be of interest to the students include the information desk personnel, security personnel, assistants who care for the exhibits, and so forth.

- Japanese gardens -- Many opportunities for occupational exploration may be found in this setting. The groundskeepers, gardeners, and personnel who maintain the public operation of the facility are all occupations that might appeal to these students.

- Japanese restaurant -- Both vocational and academic components may be readily incorporated with this activity. If this visit took place before the supermarket visit, it could provide the background for the shopping exercise. Students could state what they liked best at the restaurant and then look up the recipes and ingredients that would comprise the shopping list. The occupations associated with food service are myriad: chef, host or hostess, waiter or waitress, kitchen helper, busser, cashier, and others.

All of the comments and suggestions offered above for the Japanese motif are equally applicable to the other thematic ventures: The variety of employment opportunities abounds at the state capitol, at the radio station that plays '50s music, and at the '50s-style drive-in restaurant visited by the Options students.

It may be that a number of these suggestions have been implemented by XXXX, and they simply were not in evidence during our visits there. Our conclusions and recommendations are based on our observations and analyses of data derived from the study participants, and are offered for consideration. It is our contention that employment information should not merely be incorporated, but should provide a framework for the learning of thematic content. Rather than diminishing the experience, the job-related information could actually augment and enhance the academic elements of the activities.

2. Transition and Parental Involvement

We were told that XXXX is in the process of developing an updated transition component for the Options program. Transition has been a part of the program at XXXX, but due to its academic nature, transition to the world of work has never been the primary focus. As pointed out by some alumni parents, however, transition and the world of work become major factors after students leave the nurturing environment of the Options program. Fortunately, the Options program and parents are in an enviable position to provide transition support to their students and alumni.

Certainly, the PAB is one of the strong points of the Options program, and to a large degree it is responsible for the success of the program. Furthermore, parents, both current and alumni, and the PAB have the potential to help develop an outstanding transition program. While the current parents are supporting the Options program, they could also participate in transition planning. One advantage that Options parents have is their access to an array of employment opportunities and a network of dedicated parents, friends, and relatives. Some Options parents operate their own companies, others are well placed in the corporate world, and some are established in the public sector. Most Options parents appear to have long-term, well-established career situations with a network of contacts, and probably exert more influence than the average parent in the job market. This fortuitous circumstance should be used to further the transition program at XXXX.

In addition to the obvious need for employment opportunities for graduates, there is a need for job sampling opportunities, internships, part-time employment, and career exploration for current students. Since job placements are often difficult to find, this is an area where both the PAB and alumni parents should play a major role. As anyone seeking a job knows, one of the best ways to find employment is through networking.

Some of the parents of XXXX graduates have expressed interest in continuing their relationship with the Options program. Almost all alumni parents hold positive opinions about this program, but many reported the need for a better transition component. Some alumni parents reported a willingness to go back to the program and share some of their transition concerns, experiences, insights, expertise, and recommendations. This wealth of experience should be incorporated into any planned transition program at XXXX. In addition, these parents have access to the job market and possible placements where students could explore career situations. This group would be a valuable addition to any network.

3. IEP Issues and Transition Plan Generators

Another transition element that should be considered is the development of transition plans to be included with the IEPs. Interviews disclosed that students develop transition plans in their career preparation classes during their junior and senior years, but none were included with the IEPs. It appears that this process could be more formal. Students should have a sense of where they are going and how they will get there, be it the world of work or further education. Parents should have a defined role in developing transition plans, since they will typically be a major factor in their child's transition.

Expert Transition System

One of the areas we explored to assist in transition planning was that of transition plan generators. At the University of Washington Dr. Stowitscheck and colleagues of the Expert Transition System Project have developed a computer-assisted transition plan generator, which was reviewed by our project staff.

The *Expert Transition System Manual* is a three-part document consisting of the following sections:

1. Local Transition Initiative Guide
2. Computer Guided Transition Planning
3. High School Supported Employment Guide

The publication was produced as part of a grant to the University of Washington from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The manual uses a technological approach to transition planning, and its intent is to provide assistance in planning transition for high school students with disabilities. The hallmark of the manual is systematic preparation for employment. While the system was developed and tested with youth with developmental disabilities, it was found by the developers to be applicable for all students with disabilities.

The Local Transition Guide assumes that there is a core group or at least one individual in the local educational agency who is responsible for overseeing the transition process. The following describes the procedure:

1. Decide on and commit to a set of transition priorities.
2. Examine the current curriculum and program relative to these transition priorities.
3. Outline a plan of action and timeline to follow.
4. Organize a local transition initiative.
5. Consult with and prepare parents for their roles as transition mediators.

6. Develop an interagency community collaboration team.
7. Establish an ongoing curriculum review and reformulation process.
8. Conduct team-based individual transition planning.
9. Implement school-based and community-based instruction and service relative to employment, residential living and community living goals.
10. Routinely evaluate and revise the program.

The manual provides detailed instructions for each of these 10 steps. Furthermore, the section on Computer Guided Transition Planning provides a computer-driven Transition Plan Generator. The Generator is intended to provide assistance for steps 8, 9, and 10 above. By employing the 'print' option the user can generate combinations of the following products:

- Transition Statement (of needed services)
- IEP Form Information (IEP cover sheet)
- Transition Function Evaluation
- Student Transition Planning Information (goals, activities, timelines, assignments)
- Detailed Information (student demographic information)

This instrument appears to be particularly suited for generating transition plans for students with developmental disabilities. The generator accounts for many standard items, such as government agencies to contact, various training and work situations, transportation and residential possibilities, and so on. It is flexible and user friendly, and the user may add items or modify items, since it allows for customization.

A copy was provided to the Options staff for their use in developing future plans. Of course, as with many computer-generated products, there is potential for abuse, since a transition plan could be generated using the standard items without much thought given to the outcome. Thus, it is possible to generate plans which have the same goals and are not tailored to the individual graduate.

Section three, the *High School Supported Employment Guide* , is a statement for early employment preparation and community-based secondary education for students with disabilities. The authors make the argument that early employment support for disabled students not only provides some paid work experience, but it also provides for personal development, social integration, and building personal worth. It is suggested that this support should be on a year-round basis and not necessarily on a 7:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. school schedule.

The individuals involved in supporting the program are as follows:

1. Transition Facilitator: Job development and job analysis
2. All Staff: Job-student/work matching
3. Teachers of Younger Students: Intensive instruction in employment prerequisites (e.g., use of public transportation, social-vocational skill development, extension of work endurance time, etc.)
4. Teachers of Older Students: Job placement and support, supervision of training and fading
5. Paraprofessionals: Job coaching and fading, building of natural work site supports, extension and generalization of prerequisite skills
6. Parents/Guardians: Continuity of employment support, natural support development

The appendix contains the following forms to be used in carrying out employment support activities:

1. Job Analysis Notes
2. Social Screening Assessment
3. Job Match Profile
4. Job Task Data Profile
5. Employment Training Plan
6. Employer Rating Card

If one accepts the points of view and opinions expressed in this document, then they should find the *Expert Transition System Manual* a useful tool.

Graduating to Independence

A number of other aids for developing transition plans are available from various sources. Some examples are the *Red Book on Work Incentives* developed by the Social Security Administration (SSA), the *Washington State Vendor Directory*, and *Graduating to Independence*, an information package developed by the SSA.

Graduating to Independence is a useful five-part publication containing information for young people with disabilities. The introduction contains information and suggestions for professionals working with young people with disabilities. Part I provides information and special messages for young people and their parents. Parents are informed about the contents of the package. They and their child are encouraged to view the videotape provided in Part III, and to seek additional information from the SSA.

Part II explains Social Security, supplemental security income (SSI), and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). Some of the important topics covered are eligibility requirements, benefits, and work incentives. Part III contains motivational examples of young people with disabilities who have successfully entered the work force. Part IV is a motivational videotape showing examples of young people making the transition from school to the world of work. Part V is a computer-guided benefit estimator for SSI and SSDI. This program appears to be a useful tool for assisting a young person with disabilities in determining the amount of financial assistance available from SSI and/or SSDI. This program should be used with caution, however, since the estimate is only as good as the information entered into it. In addition, the operator must be knowledgeable about the various SSA rules that apply when determining eligibility and benefits. The process is further complicated by the fact that SSA rules and regulations are constantly changing. Consequently, this software should be registered with SSA by the user in order to obtain updates when they become available. The results are only an estimate, and when in doubt the SSA should be contacted.